

Well-Being and Fishery Governance

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Abstract

This paper provides summaries of presentations at a special session of IIFET 2012 that explored the potential value of a 'wellbeing' approach in small-scale fisheries, drawing on insights from the *Governing Small-Scale Fisheries for Wellbeing and Resilience* project. The research aimed to apply wellbeing concepts to both better understand fishery values and dynamics, and to improve fisheries management and governance. Wellbeing provides a framework to broaden the analysis of fisheries by addressing the three complementary elements of material, relational and subjective wellbeing, to properly consider the full range of values and objectives in fisheries, and to more comprehensively assess policy alternatives. The paper introduces the idea of wellbeing, then focuses on four themes: (1) the extent to which a wellbeing lens provides a more comprehensive way to approach concerns about poverty, livelihoods and vulnerability in small-scale fisheries; (2) how a wellbeing lens connects to a social-ecological systems perspective, and to analyses of resilience within a fisheries context; (3) how adoption of wellbeing perspectives can contribute to fishery governance thinking, and inform the implementation of fisheries management instruments, and (4) how a wellbeing lens can be applied in specific fisheries, through small-scale fishery case studies from South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

There is now a widespread realization of the need to address fisheries and marine issues through systems perspectives and holistic interdisciplinary approaches, rather than the narrower and more disciplinary analysis of the past. Much attention is being paid to developing suitable mechanisms to accomplish this, especially in small-scale fisheries. Recent research, such as in the *Governing Small-Scale Fisheries for Wellbeing and Resilience* CGIAR-Canada Linkage Fund project, has identified the potential value of a 'wellbeing' approach in understanding the complex social and economic dynamics of small-scale fisheries, and in moving toward improved fisheries management and governance. This approach broadens the analysis of fisheries, as it does for other social-ecological systems, by addressing the three complementary elements of material, relational and subjective wellbeing [1,2] to properly consider the full range of values and objectives in fisheries, and to more comprehensively assess management and policy alternatives.

This paper provides summaries of presentations made in a special session of IIFET 2012, describing the potential relevance of a wellbeing lens in small-scale fisheries. The paper introduces the idea of wellbeing, then focuses on four themes: (1) the extent to which a wellbeing lens provides a more comprehensive way to approach concerns about poverty, livelihoods and vulnerability in small-scale fisheries; (2) how a wellbeing lens connects to a social-ecological systems perspective, and to analyses of resilience within a fisheries context; (3) how adoption of wellbeing perspectives can contribute to fishery governance thinking, and inform the implementation of fisheries management instruments, and (4) how a wellbeing lens can be applied in the governance of specific fisheries, through small-scale fishery case studies from South Africa.

THE CONCEPT OF WELLBEING

Wellbeing has been defined by McGregor [1] as “a state of being with others, which arises where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one’s goals, and where one can enjoy a satisfactory quality of life”. This reflects a multi-dimensional approach to assessment of human wellbeing in which three perspectives are taken into account:

1. The *material* dimension focuses on what (resources) a person has and the extent to which the needs of the person are met,
2. The *relational* dimension considers social relationships which the person engages in to pursue wellbeing (for example, relations which give access to market or resources, or shape behaviour through institutions, family and social structures),
3. The *cognitive / subjective* dimension accounts for satisfaction with the quality of life that is achieved (e.g., ‘happiness’).

Referred to as the “3-D wellbeing framework” (based on the above three dimensions), this scheme provides a mechanism to ‘flesh out’ in a systematic manner the human aspects needed in analysis of fishery options and policies, in particular adding subjective and relational dimensions to broaden beyond conventional analysis that focuses solely on material goals [3]. This is compatible, for example, with the emergence and growth of co-management, which recognizes the relational dimension, institutionalizing the governance interaction among fishers and between fishers and government. The subjective dimension also builds upon the many studies of the importance of fishing as a ‘way of life’ and on the job satisfaction of fishermen (e.g., [4]).

Although the importance of these relational and subjective elements of wellbeing is widely recognized, their incorporation into fishery policy has been minimal to date. We build on the observation of Coulthard et al. [5] who note that the wellbeing approach can be useful to both researchers and policy makers as “...a possible basis for the design of the institutional arrangements of governance so as to secure greater legitimacy and compliance for policy.” This proposition is addressed by summarising the key points made in each of the four presentations in this session.

A WELLBEING PERSPECTIVE ON SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

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Since the ground-breaking ‘Voices of the Poor’ study by Narayan et al. for the World Bank [6,7], development analysts and policy-makers have been aware of the need to include people’s subjective experiences of poverty in analyses intended to inform poverty reduction policies. The concept of wellbeing has since been evolved into an analytical model with an associated set of indicators, to assess material, relational and subjective aspects of poverty. This presentation introduces and reviews the outcomes of a just-completed project on *Governing Small-Scale Fisheries for Wellbeing and Resilience* which sought to incorporate wellbeing concepts into assessments of poverty in small-scale fisheries in developing countries [3].

This research focused on three issues relating to small-scale fisheries, all indicating that a social wellbeing approach may improve understanding of complex structure and dynamics, thus improving fisheries management and governance [3]. First, we investigated how a wellbeing lens adds usefully to a social-ecological systems perspective by strengthening the conceptualization of the ‘social’ in integrated analytical frameworks such as social-ecological resilience or ecosystem based fisheries management. Specifically, wellbeing thinking helps to draw out the central role of values and provides a normative context for these frameworks. Second, we examined the extent to which a wellbeing lens provides an improved way of incorporating the neglected ‘social’ component of sustainable development in fisheries. We found it brought to the fore neglected issues of importance in participatory management of fisheries, such as identity and occupational cultures, job satisfaction, youth aspirations and community cohesion. The wellbeing lens also provides insights into conflicts and trade-offs, especially in terms of livelihood considerations. Third, we asked whether adoption of wellbeing perspectives can influence the quality of governance. We argue that a wellbeing lens can provide a broader, more multi-dimensional perspective that is much needed to properly assess the relative value of management options, each with its specific benefits and costs in a given fishery.

LINKING WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE TO IMPROVE FISHERY GOVERNANCE

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Transdisciplinary approaches and innovative combinations of social and ecological theory are required to deal with complexity and change in fisheries and other human-ecological systems. This paper examined the interplay and complementarities that emerge by linking resilience and social wellbeing approaches to better understand and govern fisheries. (See [8] for a full treatment of the topic, and [9] for a related discussion.) After first discussing the nature of

resilience and of wellbeing, and the limitations of applying each concept individually, the paper explored the interplay of resilience and wellbeing in fostering a social-ecological perspective that promises more appropriate management and policy actions. Five key points of interplay are examined: (1) the limitations of simplistic optimization thinking; (2) the role of human agency and values; (3) understandings of scale; (4) insights on “controlling variables”; and (5) perspectives on thresholds and boundaries. This analysis leads to a series of insights for enhancing transdisciplinary research and fishery governance.

BROADENING THE SCOPE IN FISHERY GOVERNANCE WITH A WELLBEING LENS

Authors: Ratana Chuenpagdee (Memorial University, Canada), Derek Johnson (University of Manitoba, Canada), Anthony Charles (Saint Mary's University, Canada).

Decades of social science research has shown that fisheries, particularly small-scale, are integral to community wellbeing. They contribute to food security, men's, women's, and children's livelihoods, health, community identity, and social cohesion. These contributions need to be well-defined and contextualized, as well as differentiated between fishing sectors, for better fisheries governance. By applying a broad, multi-dimensional perspective of wellbeing to evaluating the overall societal importance of fisheries [3], we can inform fisheries management decisions, especially with respect to choices and trade-offs that need to be made in implementing fisheries instruments. The paper offered a simple evaluation scheme to assess fisheries management options using a set of attributes informed by wellbeing literature such as material wealth, job satisfaction, social relational success, principled governance, and ecological sustainability.

WELLBEING IN SMALL-SCALE FISHING COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Coastal resources play a significant role in supporting the livelihoods and contributing to the wellbeing of marginalised communities in South Africa. Through an analysis of two small-scale-fishing communities in South Africa, this research sought to assess the governance frameworks which seek to re-incorporate previously excluded fishers in South Africa. For many years under the apartheid era, the rights of many black and coloured small-scale fishers to access and use fisheries resources was not recognized by the South African government. Since the post-apartheid era in 1994, the democratic government of South Africa has sought to distribute legal rights to access and use fisheries resources to small-scale fishing communities. However, although legal mechanisms have been put in place to give the previously excluded fishers legal access to the resources, the small-scale fisheries sector has remained neglected even in the post-apartheid era. As a result of this, the wellbeing of many small-scale fishing communities has been negatively impacted by the lack of re-distribution of access to fisheries resources in a manner that can benefit the wellbeing of small-scale fishers.

Through the lens of two case study sites, i.e. Mankosi in the Eastern Cape province and Doringbaai in the Western Cape province, this research has sought to understand how fisheries governance systems in South Africa have impacted on the wellbeing of small-scale fishing communities. Moreover, the research also used a gender lens to understand the different roles of men and women in the small-scale fisheries sector in the different provinces, and how these roles have been affected by fisheries governance systems. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data.

Findings reveal that despite the fact that communities have benefited from legal access to fisheries, the sector has also had negative economic and social impacts on their wellbeing. Although fishing communities have been given legal access to the resources, this access does not give them secure tenure to the resources as there are many restrictions on their ability to harvest the resources that do not consider their livelihood needs. Therefore, because of the mismatch between fishing regulations and wellbeing needs, many fishers believe that access to the resources is not enough if there are no capabilities given to the fishers to translate access into opportunities to achieve wellbeing. The findings also reveal that men and women have differing roles in fisheries, and as a result, have been impacted differently by fisheries governance. With these gender dynamics in small-scale fishing communities poorly understood in fisheries governance, there have not been means provided to address the different wellbeing needs of men and women that have been impacted negatively by fisheries governance deficiencies in South Africa.

Findings of this study affirm the need for fisheries governance strategies to reflect the needs of poor fishing communities by linking the fishing rights agenda with broader social development, in order to bring about sustainable social wellbeing. Fisheries governance should not be just about fishing, but should also consider women empowerment in the sector, youth development, and HIV and drug abuse awareness in small-scale fishing communities, as these are some of the pressing issues affecting these communities' wellbeing alongside the lack of good governance. The new South African Small-scale Fisheries Policy of 2012, which aims to restore justice and the recognition of customary rights of small-scale fishing communities within the fisheries management agenda, is one step forward to achieving wellbeing in the fishing communities.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis to date indicates that the wellbeing lens, by incorporating social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions, reflects the multi-faceted reality of sustainable development in fisheries, enabling a better understanding and assessment of conflicts and trade-offs, and improved approaches for fisheries governance to incorporate considerations such as livelihoods, poverty, vulnerability, and social capital. A wellbeing lens, by providing a broader, more multi-dimensional perspective, can also contribute to fishery governance, in particular by informing the implementation of fishery management instruments and improving the assessment of management options, each of which has its specific benefits and costs in a given fishery. Furthermore, the wellbeing lens provides a connection to a social-ecological systems perspective, and to analyses of resilience within a fisheries context. Specifically, the addition of wellbeing to resilience analysis provides a normative context for resilience thinking, and helps to build a more integrated perspective on thresholds and boundaries.

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